

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

ANNUAL REPORT



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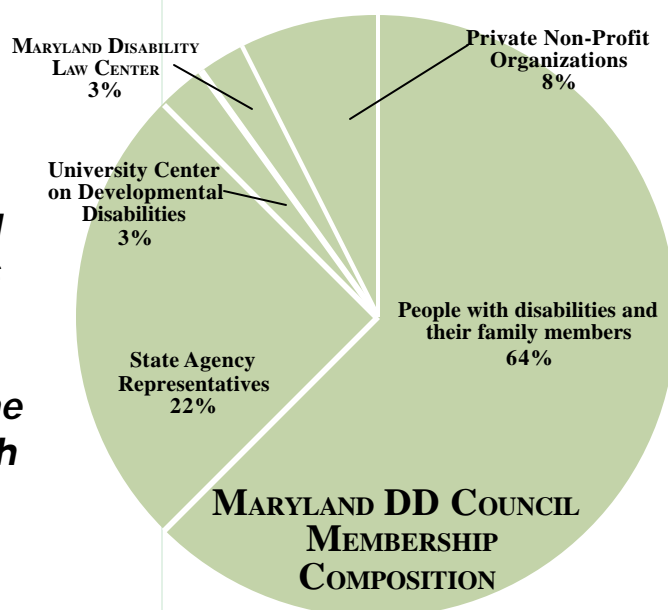
What is the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council?

- The Council is a public policy and advocacy organization that works to positively affect programs, policies and practices of importance to people with developmental disabilities and their families.
- The Council, an independent, self-governing organization, represents no single arm of government but rather the interests of persons with developmental disabilities.
- The Council advocates for public policy and supportive practices and opportunities that promote the full inclusion of all people with developmental disabilities in community life.
- The Council designs and sponsors innovative projects to show responsive, positive ways of supporting people with disabilities.
- Council projects promote activities in the areas of: employment, education and early intervention, child care, transportation, community supports, recreation, housing, health, and quality assurance.
- The Council participates in coalitions and partnerships promoting quality approaches to support people with developmental disabilities according to their individual choices, abilities and needs.

Who Makes Up the Council?

- Members are selected by the Council and appointed by the Governor for five-year terms.
- Members may serve on the Council for a total of two terms.
- 60% of Council Members are people with disabilities or family members of people with disabilities.
- Other Council members include representatives from state agencies (e.g. Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Rehabilitation Services, and the Developmental Disabilities Administration), service providers, higher education, the Protection and Advocacy System (Maryland Disability Law Center) and the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (Kennedy Krieger Institute).

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council advocates for public policy and supportive practices and opportunities that promote the full inclusion of all people with developmental disabilities in community life.



VISION: *Maryland's children with disabilities are educated in their home schools with quality general curriculums and appropriate supports.*

INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES:

The Assistive Technology Co-op:

Expanding Technology Access for Children with Developmental Disabilities

AT: L.A.S.T.

AT: L.A.S.T. expanded access to assistive technology for school-age children in Maryland, both in their schools and homes, by offering large discounts on assistive technology through a buying cooperative consisting of non-public schools, home schooling groups, local schools, and families. The discounts allowed schools and families to buy their own assistive technology at a much cheaper price; the Co-op also offered workshops about appropriate assistive technology selection and use. The project established clearinghouses to facilitate purchases and hosted workshops to inform parents about appropriate assistive technology selection and use. In partnership with the Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program, AT: L.A.S.T. assisted families secure low-interest credit to further help them afford needed assistive technology.

Connections - Fostering Inclusion in General Education and Extracurricular Activities

Allegany County Public Schools

This project created partnerships in a rural county between general and special education personnel, service providers, students, families and schools. Expanded and refined a co-teaching model for including students with developmental disabilities in general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools by adapting curriculum and extracurricular activities using assistive technology. Developed a training kit for assistive technology, established mentor and pilot schools, and launched a web site. School personnel received training on assistive technology accommodation and implementation. The Connections project saw success this year in the 23 children who received more inclusive programs, the many IEPs that were amended to give greater access to general education and the 467 professionals who became knowledgeable about assistive technology and inclusion.

Coalition for Inclusive Educational Opportunities

Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education

Through Council funding, the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE) provided advocacy for families seeking educational services for their children in the least restrictive environment. They educate and empower families about inclusion through training and information dissemination. The work of MCIE increased placement of students in less restrictive education settings; assisted parents in organizing to promote systemic change and strategy development; provided information to develop or improve inclusive services; and staff monitored federal, state, and local government practices to increase and improve inclusive education practices throughout Maryland. In 2001, MCIE provided services to 353 families and represented 173 families at IEP meetings, mediation, and judicial proceedings. This year MCIE's Advocacy Services maintained a 99% success rate for students and their families. Indeed, without Advocacy Services most of these families would have found it difficult to secure a less restrictive placement for their children.

"...a vision of a society where neighborhood schools welcome all students, engage them in learning, and form the foundation for inclusive communities"

- MCIE



Special Education Leadership Project

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

The first year of this three year in-house project set high goals including: increased involvement of parents in systems change efforts, increased number of parents in monitoring, improved local and state special education policy, increased capacity of schools to serve students with disabilities, and increased the number of students with developmental disabilities educated in the least restrictive environment. The Council established the Special Education Leadership Project to organize and strengthen local Special Education Citizen Advisory Committees (SECACs). During the initial stage of the Project, staff assisted three existing SECACs with coordination, training and support to parent leaders and community members to educate local school boards and policymakers and implement strategies on a local level. In addition, project staff assisted in the development of four new SECACs, drawing on community support groups and local disability organizations. Activities included coordination of monthly meetings, identifying community partners, advocacy training, and collection of relevant data. During the fall of 2001, the project held a statewide forum which brought together more than 100 participants - parents, community representatives, disability groups, educators and administrators - to discuss the value of partnerships and review special education issues in Maryland.

*"Alone we make
SOME things happen...
Together we make
GREAT things happen"*

Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities

The Education Advocacy Coalition (EAC) for Students with Disabilities testified on legislation and advocated with school systems resulting in the passage of legislation and policy changes favorable to students with disabilities. The Council testified in favor of increased funding for special education through the Commission on Education Finance, Equity and Excellence and provided testimony to the General Assembly resulting in budget language requiring the Maryland State Department of Education to report to state legislators on the results of monitoring by the United States Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

State Interagency Coordinating Council

The Council served on the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) to advise the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program and work to ensure quality, interagency services for children with disabilities age 0 through age 2. The SICC was active in promoting the education of infants and toddlers in natural environments, and outreach to underserved families.

Paraeducator Work Group

At the Council's urging, the Maryland State Department of Education established a Paraeducator Work Group to study and make recommendations on the training, recruitment, retention, and credentialing of paraeducators. The Work Group did extensive surveying of students, families, educators, paraeducators, and administrators to ensure that recommendations represented the concerns and ideas of a broad group of stakeholders.



VISION: *Marylanders with developmental disabilities will live in affordable, accessible homes of their choice with necessary community supports.*

INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES:

Affordable Housing Resources

Housing and disability advocates, and government agencies worked to increase home ownership for people with disabilities by addressing implementation and systemic issues. Cross-disability efforts this year built on a successful three-year demonstration project, spearheaded by the Council, that provided state mortgages to over 110 first time home buyers with disabilities. Through coalition building, educating and informing legislators and policymakers, and widespread advocacy the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) agreed to continue the mortgage product for another three years, with an additional investment of \$7.5M. This will bring the total investment to nearly \$16M. The Home of Your Own Coalition, chaired by the Council, worked with DHCD to appropriately modify the program to assure equitable access.

Affordable Housing Action Plan

Technical Assistance Collaborative

The Council worked closely with the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities to design and participate in a comprehensive, statewide assessment of housing opportunities for people with significant disabilities. The report developed strategies to address affordability and accessibility issues, with recommendations for implementation.

Information, Education and Action

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

The Council established a cross-disability e-group to inform and mobilize advocates around critical housing issues in Maryland. Council staff presented housing information at forums attended by people with disabilities, families, advocates, teachers, Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, service providers and others.

VISION: *People with developmental disabilities are informed and empowered and participate meaningfully in the development and direction of state and local policies, practices, services and supports.*

INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES:

Living Free: A Campaign for Freedom

People On the Go and The Arc of Maryland

The Campaign for Freedom assisted self-advocates to increase their advocacy skills so they can better help people move out of institutions and live in the community. They conducted a Statewide Self-Advocacy Conference and a Leadership Retreat where they trained 40 participants in leadership, self-advocacy and self-determination. People On the Go co-sponsored Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature with the MD DD Council and other organizations. Approximately 250 people attended, some with scholarships and other support for self-advocates provided by the project. This event made it possible for thirteen local self advocacy groups to visit their legislators in Annapolis.

The Campaign for Freedom started as a result of an open-mike forum at a People On the Go meeting in December 1998. Many members said they wanted to have people move out of institutions. People On the Go voted this the number one top issue.

- *Living Free Express*

Volume 1, Issue 1 November 2000



Partners in Policymaking

The Arc of Maryland/ MD Infants and Toddlers Program-Family Support Network/MD DD Council

Partners in Policymaking is a leadership training program designed for parents of young children with developmental disabilities and adults with developmental disabilities. The program teaches leadership skills, and provides participants with the opportunity to practice new skills, build a network of people from diverse cultural backgrounds and life experiences, and learn from national experts. In 2001 this project trained 28 family members and self-advocates from fourteen counties to be effective systems change advocates. Partners in Policymaking, a program conducted in many states throughout the country, has turned out 170 advocates in Maryland in its first six years. The Partners project is about systems change - creating, working toward, and achieving a vision of shared values about people with disabilities. It is based on the belief that the most effective and enduring public policy decisions are made by the people who need and use services in partnership with elected officials, school personnel and other policymakers.

"We came together a diverse group of individuals from across the state representing varying disabilities, concerns, and agendas. When we left we were still all those things, but we were also a unified whole with the tools, confidence and network to make things happen. At the end of Partners I am stronger, more focused and more sure of my ability to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities as well as the lives of their families."

- Partners in Policymaking Graduate

Legislative Advocacy Support Fund

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

The fund was established in 2001 by the Council as a way to support people with developmental disabilities and their family members in their efforts to educate and inform legislators and policymakers on issues affecting the inclusion, independence, self-determination, and self-advocacy of Marylanders with developmental disabilities. The Council reimbursed costs directly related to advocacy such as transportation, personal assistance costs, and child care. The Advocacy Support Fund made it possible for 43 people to participate actively in legislative advocacy in 2001.

"If I can leave with one thing, it will be to advocate for myself later in life"

- YLF Graduate

Youth Leadership Forum

Independence Now

The second annual Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) brought together twenty-five high school juniors and seniors with disabilities for a unique career leadership program. Cross-disability representation, in this four day forum, offered peers with common challenges and experiences the opportunity to learn together and from one another. The program demonstrates leadership by example; adults with disabilities serve as faculty, staff, and mentors. YLF offered an intense schedule with emphasis on leadership skills, independence, disability history, career planning, and team building activities. Participants left with goals outlined in "personal leadership plans" they wrote for themselves and are offered follow-up activities that support the continuance of networking among all participants.



VISION: *People with developmental disabilities have transportation options that are affordable and accessible and allow them to travel where and when they need.*

INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES:

Expanding the Availability and Accessibility of Public Transportation for People with Disabilities

Wicomico Transit

“NO BARRIERS”

- ☞ Interagency coordination to improve transportation services
- ☞ Transit that crosses county lines seamlessly
- ☞ Expanded days of transportation service offered to transit riders
- ☞ Expanded routes and hours of service offered to riders
- ☞ Increased access to the community for all people
- ☞ Promotes independence and inclusion
- ☞ 3 public transit systems link the Lower Eastern Shore together
- ☞ Deviated fixed routes allows curb-to-curb service if required
- ☞ One transportation system to meet the needs of all riders

This project increased the amount of rural transportation available to residents of Wicomico County, and therefore continued to increase ridership by 5% annually. The project added additional routes in rural areas that were not being served and incorporated existing routes of non-profit agencies that serve people with disabilities. Along with educating people about the use of public transportation systems, the Wicomico Transit project expanded the hours of

service to complement those of evolving rural services and offered more weekday and weekend service. This year, the Wicomico County Transit project trained more than 65 riders with disabilities to use the transit system so they could benefit from these enhancements.

Transportation Action Project

Independence Now

The Transportation Action Project developed and distributed more than 2,000 Transportation Resource Guides specific to two counties in Maryland. They began development of training for paratransit drivers, and explored the establishment of a model training curriculum for students with disabilities in several high schools. The Transportation Action Group (TAG), comprised primarily of self-advocates from Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, advocated for accessible bus stops, and surveyed users of fixed route transit to examine if usage increased as a result of the accessible bus stop campaign. Surveys provided specific data about the types of obstacles individuals with disabilities face when using the transportation systems in Maryland and Suburban Washington.

Transit Riders League of Metropolitan Baltimore

Citizens Planning and Housing Association

United several interest groups into one broad-based, transit constituency and integrated the disability community's advocacy efforts to improve public transportation in the Baltimore Region.

Maryland Coordinating Committee for Human Services Transportation

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council served on this committee to examine the transportation needs of Maryland's elderly, disabled, and low-income citizens; coordinate the State's efforts to provide quality transportation services; and establish a clearinghouse for transportation coordination issues throughout the State. The Coordinating Committee was charged with developing a five-year human services transportation plan for Maryland that would help all citizens access jobs, education, training programs, health care services, and community activities.



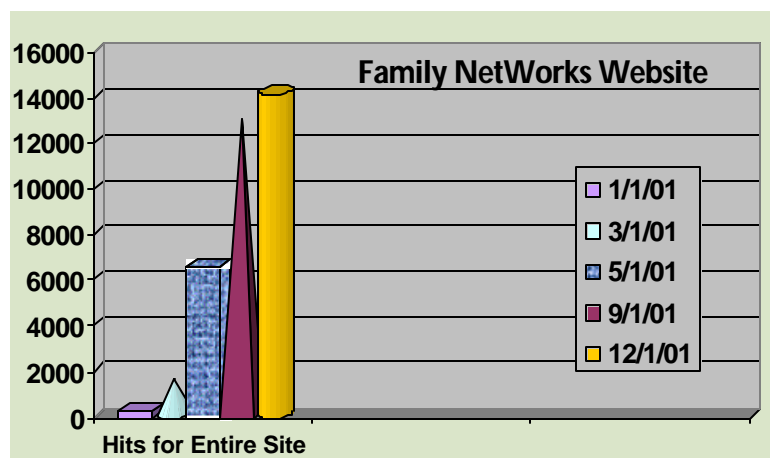
VISION: *People with developmental disabilities are included in communities with the individual or family supports that they want and need.*

INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES:

Family NET Works

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

The goal of Family NET Works, a family-centered and directed project of the Maryland DD Council under a grant from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, is to foster family empowerment and self-determination; outreach to underserved families; and impact systemic policy issues. The project accomplished its goals through the interactive and family friendly website www.family-networks.org, innovative grants, and the work of the Policy Panel. The Family Advisory Council, comprised solely of parents and individuals with disabilities, determined the direction and activities of the project. Maryland families that include a person with a developmental disability have increasingly accessed the website to Share, Discover, and Connect regarding innovative resources, critical issues, and upcoming events. A total of five mini-grants were awarded to enhance the development, implementation, and replication of best practices that support families and build capacity for local community efforts; and provide training, technical assistance, and public awareness for increasing knowledge and understanding of family choices, needs and supports. Eight small support grants were awarded to parent and individual led support groups, which focused on family and individual education and empowerment. The project was very successful in reaching underserved and minority populations in the Latino, Korean, and Orthodox Jewish communities of Maryland. In 2001 Family NET Works received notification that the grant would continue through January, 2003.



Partners Plus

The Arc of Maryland and Change, Inc.

The Partners Plus project increased respite options for families with children with developmental disabilities by providing a family centered and community based model of respite services throughout Maryland. The project utilized community stakeholders to form a Local Planning Group (LPG) which offered workshops that supported families to locate and train their own respite providers, thereby maximizing their choice and control over services. Community capacity was built through a train the trainer model and assistance was provided in eight counties and their identified LPGs.

Terrific Teens at Kamp A-Kom-Plish Inclusive Summer Camp Project

Melwood

Kamp A-Kom-Plish expanded a pre-vocational training program for youth with and without disabilities to prepare them to become Counselors-In-Training. Information from this project will be shared with other camps through articles, conferences and a training manual to encourage the establishment of similar programs at a variety of camps throughout Maryland.



Building Foundations

Parents and Children Together (PACT)

This year PACT provided center-based services through the Building Foundations project to more than 25 parents with cognitive limitations and their children. The goal of the program was (1) to keep families headed by parents with cognitive limitations together by teaching effective parenting and independent living skills and (2) to help the children in these families stay developmentally on target. Staff developed recommendations to address systemic barriers, identify strategies, and determine best practices that support parents with cognitive disabilities. A curriculum guide for professionals serving these families was developed and distributed throughout the state.

Parent to Parent Network

The Arc of Montgomery County

Parents of newly-diagnosed children and/or young children were matched with more experienced parents, who served as mentors. Efforts in 2001 focused on marketing the program to multicultural communities and increasing matches made in all disability areas. Statewide replication of the project was also a strong focus this year.

Informing & Empowering Families

The Council widely disseminated its newsletter, *Council Connections* and a variety of publications to educate, inform, and assist individuals, families, service providers, legislators, and the general community. Key publications include *Visions of Equality*, *About Families*, and *Planning Now: A Futures and Estate Planning Guide for Parents of Children and Adults with Developmental Disabilities*. These publications provided information to more than 600 people around the state, more than 500 people visited to the Council website and our newsletter reached more than 3600 people this year.

The Council also offers one-time only small grants that encourage the full inclusion and contributions of people with developmental disabilities in Maryland's schools, communities, and work places. Small grants allowed a dozen people with disabilities or their family members to attend conferences on a variety of topics. Council funds sponsored a nationally known self-advocate as the keynote speaker for a statewide conference attended by over 400 self-advocates, family members, and professionals. The Council also partnered in developing a public awareness campaign around Maryland housing, co-sponsored Respite Awareness Day, supported the Opening Doors project and contributed to production costs associated with several publications statewide.

Avoiding and Ending Institutionalization

The Council is a member of the Maryland Coalition for Civil Rights for People with Disabilities, a cross disability coalition that advocates to move people with disabilities from institutional settings to the community with needed supports. The Maryland Coalition for Civil Rights for People with Disabilities issued a response to the state's Olmstead report detailing the state of the state, targeted numbers of people to move, timeframes to move people to the community, and called for significant action by setting specific goals and timelines.

Autism Waiver

Council staff worked to inform families about Maryland's new Medicaid Waiver for children with autism, which became available on July 1, 2001. Although only 250 slots were planned to be available in the first year, early interest resulted in a request for up to 500 additional slots.

Coalition for Inclusive Childcare

The Council serves on the Coalition for Inclusive Childcare, which is made up of parents, advocacy groups, child care providers, and government agencies, worked to increase inclusive child care and after school care. The Coalition worked with the Child Care Administration and Healthy Child Care Maryland to sponsor a state conference for child care and after school care providers.



VISION: *Marylanders with developmental disabilities are employed in the jobs they seek in the community that provide opportunities for living wages, benefits, and career advancement.*

INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES:

The Benefits INfoSource

Independence Now, Incorporated

Provided information and training to promote the use of Social Security Work Incentives, Medicaid, Medicare, and the Maryland Children's Health Program. Assisted people throughout Maryland by offering: a toll free statewide assistance line to provide information concerning work incentives and other benefits issues; referrals to work incentive developers on a fee-for-service basis; training about the work incentives; and technical assistance to encourage the use of work incentives. Over the course of this project more than 750 people received answers to their questions, fact sheets, or referrals. The Council is pleased that Benefits INfoSource has transitioned into a nationwide cooperative agreement with the Social Security Administration related to benefits planning, assistance, and outreach.

**"Informed
Choice
About
Work"**

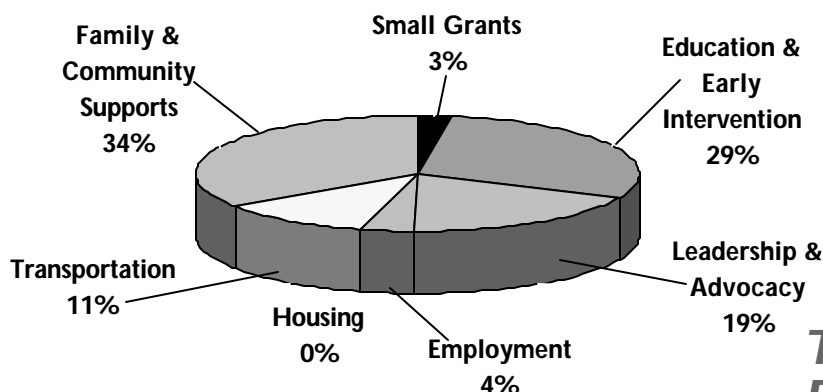
Maryland Coalition for Work Incentives Improvement

The Council served as an active member of the Coalition which educated stakeholders and legislators about work incentives available under Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 and drafted legislation for the Employed Persons with Disabilities Program that would create a Medicaid Buy-In Program in Maryland.

Supported Business Enterprise Initiative

A collaborative initiative of the Developmental Disabilities Council, Developmental Disabilities Administration, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), and the RISE Program (Reach Independence through Self-Employment). This initiative educated individuals, families, service providers and DORS' staff about self-employment opportunities and services available through the RISE Program.

2001 Project Expenditures



**Total Project
Expenditures
in 2001: \$648,160**





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